

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Reclamation

Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report on the CALFED Bay-Delta Long-Term Program, San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta (Bay-Delta), California

AGENCY: CALFED (U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service; and the State of California Resources Agency, Department of Fish and Game, Department of Water Resources, California Environmental Protection Agency, and State Water Resources Control Board)

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement

SUMMARY: Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 as amended, CALFED proposes to participate in a joint programmatic environmental impact statement/environmental impact report (EIS/EIR) on the CALFED Bay-Delta Program. The State of California Resources Agency will be the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act. The CALFED Bay-Delta Program is intended to provide long-term solutions to the problems affecting the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta (Bay-Delta system).

DATES: Written comments on the scope of alternatives and impacts to be considered should be sent to CALFED by [insert date 35 days after date of publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER]. CALFED estimates that the draft EIS/EIR will be available for public review in summer 1997.

Through a series of scoping meetings CALFED will seek public input on alternatives, concerns, and issues to be addressed in the EIS/EIR. The schedule and locations of the scoping meetings are as follows:

April 9, 1996 - 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

MetroCentro Building

Eighth and Madison Streets

Oakland, California

April 10 1996 - 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Jean Harvie Senior and Community Center

14273 River Road

Walnut Grove, California

April 11, 1996 - 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Tehama County Community Center

Gardenside Room

1500 South Jackson Road

Red Bluff, California

April 15, 1996 - 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Red Lion Inn

2001 Point West Way

Sacramento, California

April 16, 1996 - 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Red Lion Hotel/San Diego

7450 Hazard Center Drive

San Diego, California

April 17, 1996 - 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

Long Beach Renaissance Hotel

111 E. Ocean Boulevard

Long Beach, California

April 17, 1996 - 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Holiday Inn

303 E. Cordova

Pasadena, California

April 18, 1996 - 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Red Lion Inn

3100 Camino Del Rio Court

Bakersfield, California

ADDRESS: Written comments on the project scope should be sent to Mr. Rick Breitenbach, CALFED Bay-Delta Program, 1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1155, Sacramento, CA 95814.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Rick Breitenbach at the above address. Telephone number (916) 657-2666.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The State of California and the federal government are working together to stabilize, restore, and enhance the Bay-Delta system. State-federal cooperation was formalized in June 1994 with the signing of a Framework Agreement by the involved state and federal agencies. These agencies, with management and regulatory responsibility in the Bay-Delta system, are working together as CALFED and will provide policy direction and oversight for the

process. The Framework Agreement pledged that state and federal agencies would work together in three areas of Bay-Delta management:

- water quality standards formulation,
- coordination of State Water Project and Central Valley Project operations with regulatory requirements, and
- long-term solutions to problems in the Bay-Delta estuary.

The mission of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program is to develop a long-term comprehensive plan that will restore ecological health and improve water management for beneficial uses of the Bay-Delta system. Four main problem areas have been identified for the Bay-Delta system. These are water quality, ecosystem health, water supply reliability, and levee system vulnerability. Six principles guide the development of the solutions to the problems identified for the four problem areas. The principles dictate that the solutions must be affordable, equitable, durable, and implementable; must reduce conflict among competing interests; and must not redirect significant impacts.

Scoping is an early and open process designed to determine the significant issues and alternatives to be addressed in the EIS/EIR. The following are significant issues that have been identified by CALFED agencies to date:

- declining fish populations;
- Delta water quality;
- agricultural and municipal water supplies and water quality;
- health of the Delta ecosystem;
- levee stability in the Delta;
- flow and direction of water in the Delta and tributary streams;

- land uses in the Delta;
- wetland, upland, and aquatic habitats in the Delta and tributary streams;
- upstream storage reservoirs;
- recreation opportunities; and
- power generation at upstream facilities.

In addition to a no action alternative, the CALFED Bay-Delta Program has drafted alternative solutions for problems in the Bay-Delta system. Each draft alternative is a combination of many actions, such as operational and policy changes, habitat restoration, and water flow adjustments, that together form a comprehensive solution to problems in the Bay-Delta's four critical areas: ecosystem health, water quality, water supply, and vulnerability to disaster. The CALFED Bay-Delta Program operates on the premise that no single operational change or new facility will solve the myriad interrelated problems in the Bay-Delta system. Therefore, each alternative is designed to include a balanced array of actions that, when combined, solve many problems simultaneously.

Far from being final products, the draft alternatives are subject to significant change based on further public input and technical analyses including the possibility of combining portions of more than one alternative to form a new alternative.

While the alternatives vary in emphasis and detail, they share certain cost-effective measures or "core actions" that already enjoy broad acceptance among stakeholders. Currently, the alternatives include core actions addressing the following areas of concern:

- habitat restoration in the Delta and upstream of the Delta,
- reduction in the effects that diversions have on fish,
- management of anadromous fish,
- reduction in reliance on exports of water from the Delta,

- increase in water supply predictability,
- management of water quality, and
- improvements to system reliability.

Beyond their common core actions, the alternatives range from those that change the operation of the existing Bay-Delta system to those that restructure the system itself. One alternative, for example, emphasizes upgrading levees and restoring habitat in the existing system, leading to fewer regulatory restrictions on water diverted from existing diversion points. In contrast, another alternative proposes constructing new diversion points and a new conveyance facility west of the Delta. None of the alternatives exclude either reoperation or restructuring.

The draft programmatic EIS/EIR will focus on the impacts and benefits common to all methods of implementing the long-term comprehensive plan. It will contain a general analysis of the physical, biological, social, and economic impacts arising from the long-term comprehensive plan. In addition, it will address the cumulative impacts of implementation of the long-term comprehensive plan as a whole and in conjunction with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions. The programmatic EIS/EIR is intended to serve as an analytical overview document that will precede the completion of subsequent environmental documents on specific activities or groups of activities. When a specific method of implementing an activity or activities is proposed, a subsequent environmental document will be prepared that addresses the specific physical, biological, social, and economic impacts arising from that method.

A report will be available 2 weeks prior to the first scoping meeting that will present the purpose and need statement for the programmatic EIS/EIR and further elaborate on the alternatives. If a copy of the report is desired, please contact Ms. Beth Chambers at the above address. Ms. Chambers' telephone number is (916) 657-2666.

NOTE: If special assistance is required, contact Ms. Pauline Nevins at (916) 657-2666. Please notify Ms. Nevins as far in advance of the workshops as possible and not later than April 1, 1996 to enable CALFED to secure the needed services. If a request cannot be honored, the requestor will be notified. A telephone device for the hearing impaired (TDD) is available from TDD phones at 1-800-735-2929; from voice phones at 1-800-735-2922.